

U.S. Department of State

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA)

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

Funding Opportunity Title: FY 2024 National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y) Program

Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement

Funding Opportunity Number: SFOP0010132

Assistance Listing (formerly CFDA) Number: 19.415

Deadline for Applications: January 26, 2024

Executive Summary:

The Office of Citizen Exchanges of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) announces an open competition for one cooperative agreement for the FY 2024 National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y) program. NSLI-Y increases the number of American youth (ages 15 to 18) who learn critical foreign languages in support of strengthening national security, building mutual understanding, and preparing for the global economy. NSLI-Y offers overseas summer and academic year programs, as well as 10-week virtual programs (Virtual NSLI-Y) for beginners. U.S. public and private non-profit organizations, meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3), may submit proposals to cooperate with ECA in the overall administration of NSLI-Y organizational responsibilities and the implementation of overseas summer and academic year language programs for approximately 535 participants, and virtual programs for approximately 200 participants, according to the guidance detailed in this NOFO. Overseas NSLI-Y program activities funded by this award will take place during summer 2025 and academic year 2025-2026 in locations where Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), Hindi, Indonesian, Korean, Persian (Tajiki or Farsi), Russian, and Turkish are widely used in everyday life. Virtual NSLI-Y programs will take place online during the 2025-26 academic year. In addition, the award supports programming for NSLI-Y and Virtual NSLI-Y alumni of all program years. The award recipient will manage the comprehensive organizational and administrative responsibilities of this program and will identify qualified sub-award recipients to implement many of the overseas language programs.

Only *one* proposal will be considered by ECA from each applicant organization. In cases where more than one submission from an applicant appears in grants.gov, ECA will *only* consider the submission made closest in time to the NOFO deadline; that submission would constitute the one and only proposal ECA would review from that applicant.

It is ECA's intent to award a cooperative agreement of one base year plus one non-competitive continuation (NCC). Please see section B.) Federal Award Information, below for additional details.

A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

A.1. Authority

Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act. The purpose of the Act is "to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries...; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations...and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world." The funding authority for the program above is provided through legislation.

A.2. Purpose

NSLI-Y is part of a multi-agency U.S. government initiative that prepares American citizens to better engage with the world through languages that are critical to national security. NSLI-Y increases the number of American youth (ages 15 to 18) with the language skills necessary to advance international dialogue, promote economic prosperity and innovation worldwide, and strengthen national security by building understanding across cultures. NSLI-Y programs accelerate and improve participants' language skills through a combination of structured classroom language instruction and less formal interactive and applied learning opportunities. For additional information, please visit: <https://exchanges.state.gov/us/program/nsliy>

Virtual NSLI-Y is a 10-week virtual beginner language and culture program established in 2019 to better reach underserved or underrepresented students and expose more U.S. students to critical languages. Participants are placed into a virtual class of approximately 10 students with an experienced language teacher, receive live and asynchronous instruction, and engage in cultural activities online. To date, over 900 American high school students have participated in the Virtual NSLI-Y program. Approximately 30% of participants have gone on to apply for in-person overseas ECA programs.

NSLI-Y and Virtual NSLI-Y Program Goals:

- 1) To develop a cadre of Americans with exceptional linguistic skills in languages critical to national security, and related cultural understanding to advance international dialogue, develop skills for the global economy, and promote mutual understanding;
- 2) To provide a tangible incentive for the learning and use of foreign languages by providing overseas language study opportunities for American high school students; and,
- 3) To spark a lifetime interest in foreign languages and cultures among American youth.

Overseas NSLI-Y Programs Expected Program Outcomes:

- 1) Participants will demonstrate a substantive, measurable increase in language proficiency (oral comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing), as verified through

pre- and post-program assessments utilizing an established and widely recognized language assessment tool.

- 2) Participants will demonstrate a deeper understanding of the host country's society, institutions, and culture.
- 3) Participants will share American culture with their overseas peers, and alumni will share their overseas experiences with others in their U.S. schools and communities.
- 4) Alumni will continue their language learning, apply their linguistic and cross-cultural skills in their academic, career, and volunteer activities, and/or participate in other exchanges and educational activities to further language learning.

Virtual NSLI-Y Expected Program Outcomes:

- 1) Participants from underserved or underrepresented communities will gain access to critical languages and cultural exchange.
- 2) Participants will demonstrate language proficiency at the Novice-Low on the ACTFL Oral proficiency rating scale for the target language, as assessed by classroom teachers.
- 3) Participants will demonstrate awareness of global competence and increased understanding of cultures where the target language is spoken.
- 4) Alumni will continue their language learning, apply their linguistic and cross-cultural skills in their academic, career, and volunteer activities, and/or apply to participate in other exchanges and educational activities to further language learning.

The total amount of anticipated funding available to support the overall program administration and the overseas language program implementation for the base year is \$10,000,000, pending the availability of FY 2024 funds. This amount is intended to support approximately 535 scholarships for the overseas NSLI-Y program and approximately 200 scholarships for Virtual NSLI-Y, including all administrative and program costs.

ECA seeks one organization to:

- 1) Provide overall administration and management of the NSLI-Y overseas language immersion as well as Virtual NSLI-Y programs, and
- 2) Engage and provide oversight of sub-award implementing organizations with relevant expertise to implement overseas language programs.

Organizations applying for this award must demonstrate their own and their proposed sub-awardees' competencies in the administration and oversight of international youth exchange programs, implementing virtual programs, language instruction and related cultural activities, and language and program assessment. These activities and the roles and responsibilities of the Department and your organization are outlined below.

A.3. Program Specific Guidelines

1. STATEMENT OF WORK

a) Overview

The FY 2024 award will be executed as a cooperative agreement between the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and a single award recipient. It supports programming for current or recently graduated American high school students for overseas intensive foreign language instruction in eight critical languages: Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), Hindi, Indonesian, Korean, Persian (Tajiki or Farsi), Russian, and Turkish. The award also supports Virtual NSLI-Y online programming for beginners in select NSLI languages. In addition, the award supports programming for NSLI-Y and Virtual NSLI-Y alumni from all program years.

Applicants should identify sub-award recipients, hereafter referred to as “implementing organizations,” to carry out overseas and virtual language programs that may be in addition to those carried out by the applicant.

b) Distribution of Programs by Language, Duration, and Location

The approximate target distribution of language, duration, and potential locations are detailed below. This distribution may be adjusted with the concurrence of ECA. ECA reserves the right to alter languages, countries, programs, and participant numbers based on program goals, participant demand, safety and welfare, security, the availability of funding, and other factors.

For overseas NSLI-Y programs, applicants should propose a minimum of five participants for each academic year program and a minimum of 10 participants for each summer program. An adequate number of alternates should be identified to replace finalists who may drop out prior to the start of the program. Programs should be proposed for all eight languages, but do not need to be proposed for all potential locations. Specific locations should be where the target language is widely used in everyday life.

1. Arabic: 90 for summer; 12 for academic year. Programs may be proposed for Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco. If security considerations permit and ECA concurs, programs in additional countries may be added at a later time.
2. Chinese (Mandarin): 150 for summer; 30 for academic year. Programs may be proposed for the People’s Republic of China and Taiwan.
3. Hindi: 15 for summer. Programs may be proposed for India.
4. Indonesian: 12 for summer. Programs may be proposed for Indonesia.
5. Korean: 83 for summer; 12 for academic year. Programs may be proposed for the Republic of Korea (South Korea).
6. Persian (Tajiki or Farsi): 12 for summer. One program may be proposed for Tajikistan.

7. Russian: 95 for summer; 12 for academic year. Programs may be proposed for Estonia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, and Russia.

8. Turkish: 12 for summer. Programs may be proposed for Türkiye.

For Virtual NSLI-Y, applicants should propose a minimum of ten participants per language and an adequate number of alternates, for a ten-week online program for beginners to take place September to November and/or January to March as follows:

Arabic: 40

Chinese (Mandarin): 50

Hindi: 10

Korean: 40

Russian: 50

Turkish: 10

c) Scholarship Coverage

Ensure that the overseas NSLI-Y scholarship is comprehensive and consistent across all implementing organizations, and covers the following expenses:

- Travel: Round-trip travel between the participant's city of official residence, to the pre-departure orientation location, and to the overseas NSLI-Y program location
- Orientations: Pre-departure, arrival, mid-program (academic year only), and re-entry
- Visas: Host country entry/exit and transit visas, as needed
- Tuition and related academic expenses: Including support and testing for placement and language acquisition
- Educational and cultural programming: Including overseas language-focused excursions, volunteer opportunities, and guided internships, if applicable
- Meals: Three meals per day
- Accommodations: A host family for the entirety of each program is preferred; if students are in a dormitory or other supervised group housing for part of the exchange, there must be a host family stay for part of the program
- Health Benefits: Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) health benefits, provided by the U.S. Department of State, or equivalent health benefits
- Stipend: To cover additional living expenses if needed, as determined by in-country implementer and approved by award recipient

The NSLI-Y scholarship does not cover the following:

- Passports: Costs associated with obtaining a valid U.S. passport, except in cases of unusual hardship, as determined by the award recipient
- Medical: Required medical examinations and immunizations needed to travel to the host country or routine medical checkups

- Incidentals: Pocket money for souvenirs or additional events such as movies, ice skating, etc., except in cases of unusual hardship, as determined by the award recipient, in collaboration with ECA

For Virtual NSLI-Y, ensure the scholarship covers the following expenses:

- A minimum of 10-weeks/30 hours of instruction with an experienced language instructor through videoconferencing tools
- Program materials/textbooks
- Cultural learning and cultural enrichment activities
- Access to a digital platform for assignments, projects, etc.
- Certificate of program completion

The Virtual NSLI-Y scholarship does not cover the following:

- Travel of any kind
- Internet access, software, or hardware
- Stipend
- Health benefits

2. PROGRAM SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

I. NSLI-Y

The proposal should demonstrate flexibility and creativity in program administration to respond to natural events, disasters, or crises. Such conditions may create significant challenges to normal or routine program administration in all areas, including recruitment, selection, logistical arrangements, on-program activities and alumni activities. When appropriate, applicants should discuss areas of possible impact and present alternatives to normal program operations to mitigate further program disruption.

The proposal must incorporate the following program elements:

a) Identification and Management of Implementing Organizations

Identify sub-award implementing organizations to carry out overseas language programs. The majority of programs should be implemented through sub-awards. The applicant may propose to implement programs for approximately 30% of the total NSLI-Y participants, pending ECA approval.

ECA encourages applicants to identify an adequate number of sub-award organizations to provide a strong base of implementing organizations for each language. The applicant must demonstrate how it will continue to explore potential new partners with the goal of

strengthening and expanding program capacity for the FY 2024 program. Organizations that manage or implement other study abroad programs and will support the continued language learning of alumni should be given special consideration.

The applicant must demonstrate that each implementing organization has significant and relevant experience and expertise in planning and carrying out overseas programs in the respective language(s) and country(ies)/location(s) where it proposes to implement the program(s). All implementing organizations must be capable of handling overseas emergencies and on-program support (OPS) issues in a timely and transparent way that permits information to be conveyed to the award recipient and to ECA.

The applicant should identify the majority of program participants through the national competition described below. However, some implementing organizations may propose to recruit and select, pending ECA approval, some or all of their own participants in accordance with basic NSLI-Y eligibility requirements, utilizing a transparent, merit-based, and cost-effective selection process.

Additional Sub-award Implementing Organizations: Once the cooperative agreement is awarded, with ECA concurrence, additional sub-award implementing organizations may be added into the program if needed to meet program requirements and scholarship distribution.

U.S. Embassy Liaison and Consultation: Ensure that all implementing organizations and overseas partners establish a working relationship with the Public Diplomacy Section of the relevant U.S. Embassy, Consulate, or the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT). During the program-planning phase, implementing organizations must contact PAS to obtain concurrence on program placement locations, including the host language institution/host school, and host family or other long-term accommodation locations (regions, neighborhoods, etc.).

Implementing organizations must invite PAS to participate in the arrival orientation and request a briefing by the Embassy's Regional Security Officer or other U.S. Embassy/Consulate/AIT official to address matters of safety and security. If the program site is not in a city with an Embassy/Consulate/AIT, the implementing organization should consider routing travel through a city that will allow for Embassy/Consulate/AIT involvement. If an in-person briefing is not feasible, the implementing organization must provide a virtual briefing.

Implementing organizations should consult PAS staff regarding proposed activities with participants and/or alumni of other ECA programs. Implementing organizations should invite PAS staff to participate in NSLI-Y program events as appropriate. If the political situation in any location results in the need for the Embassy/AIT to assume more responsibility, the overseas implementing organization should work with the Embassy/AIT as appropriate.

Program Planning Meeting: Organize and facilitate an annual in-person planning meeting for implementing organizations to ensure that a single worldwide program identity is cultivated and maintained, and to discuss policies, procedures, and best practices. Each implementing organization should be represented by at least one participant at the meeting. Overseas partners may be included but are not required. If conditions do not allow for an in-person meeting, it may be conducted virtually; a series of shorter meetings over a period of time is encouraged. ECA must be notified in advance about all attendees.

Resident Director/Local Coordinator Training and Support: Facilitate additional training for resident directors, local coordinators, or other equivalent in country staff who implement student on-program support. Trainings and support systems should be flexible to be able to provide needed assistance across the program regardless of local technology or staffing structure. Funds may be used to send staff to private trainings in limited situations.

Operational Guidelines: Review and refine, with ECA concurrence, comprehensive operational guidelines, including procedures for emergency situations. Distribute the guidelines to implementing organizations and ensure that they understand, implement, and adhere to them.

b) Nationwide Recruitment and Selection of NSLI-Y Scholars

Outreach: Propose a comprehensive outreach plan to publicize and recruit a strong, diverse pool of qualified candidates. Diversity addresses, but is not limited to, ethnicity, race, gender, religion, geographic location, socio-economic status, and disability. See ECA's Diversity Statement in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for additional information. To the fullest extent possible, the proposal should address and encourage the participation of traditionally underserved audiences in all program activities. Outreach and recruitment should begin in early 2024 and be coordinated with other ECA exchanges. An outreach and recruitment plan, with specific goals must be submitted as part of the proposal. Outreach efforts should be robust and result in a quality pool of semifinalists and alternates reflecting the diversity of the United States.

Recruitment: Conduct a nationwide scholarship competition for U.S. applicants with clearly identified criteria and a formal selection process that includes documented in-person interviews for semifinalists. Virtual interviews may be considered if conditions or personal circumstances do not permit for in-person interviews. Interviews for summer applicants can be conducted individually or as a group as long as all interviews are conducted in the same format.

Disabilities: Develop a plan for outreach and placement of students with disabilities. Demonstrate how participants with disabilities will be reasonably accommodated.

Eligibility Criteria: Ensure that the following minimum criteria are used for recruitment. NSLI-Y applicants must be:

- U.S. citizens;
- 15 to 18 years of age at the approximate beginning of the program (beginning of the program can be defined as early as when the scholarship is accepted; one cut-off date for summer programs and one for academic year programs is allowed);
- Enrolled in high school or equivalent home school program at the time of application; and,
- Have a minimum 2.5 GPA on a 4.0 scale or equivalent.
- Adhere to the ECA eligibility policy, including for alumni of NSLI-Y and other ECA Youth Programs Division exchange programs.

Application: Develop a comprehensive and secure online application. Monitor the online system to limit and address technical problems. The award recipient must accommodate applicants who cannot apply online. All application materials and associated data should be available in a sortable, searchable, database format that can be easily shared with ECA upon request. Historically, 2,500-4,000 applications are received each year.

Public Inquiries: Respond to and manage general inquiries, application questions, and requests for accommodation. Record and track all inquiries related to problems or issues with any part of the application process.

Selection Process: Plan for and conduct a transparent criterion-based selection process. Evaluate and select participants who show maturity and strong evidence of their ability to succeed in an intensive, demanding language study program, and who represent the diversity of the United States' high school population, including individuals from underserved populations and locales and students with disabilities. Give preference to applicants who demonstrate their intent and ability to continue their language and culture study beyond the scholarship period and apply their critical language and cultural skills later in their professional careers. Give preference to qualified applicants who might not otherwise be able to study abroad were it not for the NSLI-Y scholarship.

Department of State Notification: Provide lists of proposed finalists and alternates to ECA for clearance prior to participant notification. Identify proposed finalists and alternates who have participated in previous ECA programs.

Program Placement: Assign finalists and alternates to particular programs based on language level and other relevant criteria to ensure that each participant is placed into an appropriate and challenging program, and when possible, contribute to positive group dynamics. The proposal should address how the participants' language skills will be assessed for placement

purposes and on what basis program assignments are made. Notify all implementing organizations of finalists and alternates from the national application pool assigned to them.

Applicant Notification: Prepare and send notifications to all finalists, alternates, and non-selected applicants. Prepare program descriptions for each overseas program based on a standard template. Inform participants of their program placement (including implementing organization, city, and school) at the time of scholarship notification, unless this is not possible due to security or other concerns about the location or program. Inform participants of specific housing accommodations (host family name, location and, if applicable, dormitory or group housing location) no later than one week prior to departure from the United States and preferably earlier.

Congressional Notification: Assist ECA in notifying Congressional Representatives and Senators of finalists selected from their district or state.

c) Language Instruction and Assessment

Language Program Standards: Develop, implement, and monitor language program standards for language instruction and language-focused cultural activities and excursions for all NSLI-Y programs. Ensure that all summer programs include a minimum of 120 hours of classroom language instruction. Ensure that all academic year programs include a minimum average of ten hours per week of classroom language instruction for most weeks of the academic year. For both summer and academic year programs, classroom language instruction should generally not exceed five hours per day.

Language Goals, Curriculum, and Teacher Training: Ensure that each implementing organization proposes, implements, and maintains an appropriate curriculum for language instruction based on relevant standards and pedagogical best practices. Ensure that each implementing organization conducts appropriate teacher training. Provide advice and guidance as needed to implementing organizations on their language goals, curriculum design, and teacher training.

Level of Instruction: Group participants in classes based on their language proficiency. Participants with widely varying levels of language knowledge must not be placed in the same class. In general, classes should be limited to approximately 12 or fewer students. Overseas implementing organizations must be informed of student language levels prior to the program start date to make appropriate student groupings, assign qualified teachers, and adapt the curriculum as needed.

Language Instruction in the Target Language and Local Dialect: A minimum of 70% of language instruction time must be devoted to the target language. A maximum of 30% of class time may

be allotted to the local dialect, if applicable. This ensures that NSLI-Y students receive sufficient instruction in the target language and are given enough language instruction to be able to communicate with their host families and others in the local community. For Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is the target language and should be taught for at least 70% of language instruction time. Colloquial Arabic as spoken in the host country should be taught for 20% to 30% of the time, unless otherwise approved by ECA.

Language Assessment: Identify and use an established, standardized, and widely recognized language assessment tool to evaluate the baseline and post-program language skills of all NSLI-Y participants. Provide to ECA the participant assessment results, including analyses and summaries, in a timely fashion after the completion of the post-program assessments. The assessment tool does not need to be the same for all languages but must be the same for all participants within the same language.

d) Monitoring Participant Safety and Well-Being

Participant Monitoring: Develop a plan for monitoring participants' safety and welfare that parallels, to the greatest extent possible, the standards for J-1 visa regulations for international secondary school students found in 22 CFR 62. This includes the identification and use of appropriate means of verifying the integrity and suitability of each host family. Ensure that all implementing organizations and any volunteers and staff who have regular contact with the NSLI-Y participants have undergone screening for suitability.

In keeping with the J-1 visa regulations, immediately report to ECA any incident or allegation involving the actual or alleged sexual exploitation, harassment, or abuse or harm of an exchange student participant. Furthermore, inform ECA promptly of any physical abuse or harm or serious problem or controversy that could be expected to bring the Department of State or the exchange program into notoriety or disrepute.

Ensure that implementing organizations have a plan for monitoring participants on a regular basis and provide adequate support and guidance to participants during their programs. All implementing organizations must maintain, at a minimum, a monthly schedule of personal contact with the participant and monthly contact with the host family, addressing legitimate concerns in a timely fashion and apprising ECA in a timely manner about significant issues. All records and data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and be provided to ECA upon request.

On-Program Support (OPS): Management of OPS issues is among the most important functions. Program and participant monitoring, to include dealing effectively with misunderstandings, adjustment issues, and emergencies, must be detailed in a monitoring plan

included in the proposal. Provide guidance to implementing organizations on handling OPS issues, as necessary. Promptly convey serious issues and concerns to ECA.

Ensure that all participants abide by NSLI-Y Terms and Conditions and other program standards and requirements. Develop, distribute, and publicize disciplinary procedures that include ECA concurrence for individual participants' dismissal from the program. Immediately inform ECA and the Embassy/Consulate/AIT of any participant that is involved in a civil or criminal police matter or is admitted to a hospital.

Emergency Contact Information and Access: Supply each participant with a cell phone, charger, and provider service to ensure a way to communicate with in-country representatives in an emergency. Ensure that ECA, participants, and their parents/guardians have access to emergency contact information for the award recipient, the U.S.-based implementing organization, and the overseas implementing organization prior to international departure.

e) Pre-Program Planning and Activities

Database: Ensure that lists of all finalists, including those from implementing organizations that identify their own participants, conform to ECA database requirements and are submitted in a spreadsheet on dates as agreed upon by ECA and the award recipient for each summer and academic year cohort. Secure and protect any personally identifiable information. All statistical information collected on ECA program applicants and participants should be transferable to databases maintained by ECA.

Terms and Conditions: Develop NSLI-Y Participant Terms and Conditions in consultation with ECA. Ensure that all participants and their parents/legal guardians sign the Terms and Conditions cleared by ECA.

Release Form: Share with all participants and their parents/legal guardians the official Minor Participant Name and/or Likeness Release form provided by ECA to permit the award recipient, implementing organizations, Department of State, and United States Government to use their image and name for program promotion or other similar purposes.

Medical Clearance: Ensure that each participant meets minimum program medical and health standards and has required immunizations prior to their departure from the United States.

Health Benefits: Enroll participants in the Bureau's Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) health benefits program and facilitate claims as necessary. Applicants may propose to use a different health plan for participants but must demonstrate that the alternate plan provides comparable or more comprehensive coverage. Coverage must begin when

students depart the United States and conclude when they return to the United States. A copy of the alternate health insurance policy should be included with the proposal.

Travel Arrangements: Ensure that implementing organizations arrange all travel in accordance with the Fly America Act. Provide an adult flight chaperone with necessary language skills for group flights to and from all overseas destinations, unless this requirement is waived by the award recipient with ECA's concurrence. Provide dates of international and domestic travel to ECA in advance of travel.

Travel Documents: Provide information to participants about obtaining valid U.S. passports. Facilitate and pay costs for obtaining all necessary visas, including transit visas.

Communication with Participants: Ensure that implementing organizations contact participants in a timely fashion in advance of departure to provide them with program information, language preparation materials, flight details, and accommodations information.

Host Family Placement: All overseas programs must include a host family stay for all or part of the program. Ensure that all implementing organizations identify and screen host families in an appropriate manner. Ensure that proper host family reference checks are conducted, recorded, and maintained. Records must be kept for three years and made available to ECA upon request.

Ensure that implementing organizations obtain concurrence from the U.S. Embassy/Consulate/AIT Public Affairs Section on the general locations of host families. Host families must have adequate financial resources to undertake hosting obligations and may receive a reasonable reimbursement to cover the costs associated with hosting a student, but not to serve as a financial incentive. The amounts of any stipends or allowances should be justified based on the host country's local economy. All implementing organizations must maintain regular, at minimum monthly, contact with host families to answer questions, provide information, and assist in working out problems.

Alternate Housing: Ensure that non-host family housing arrangements, such as dormitories or group housing, provide safe, appropriate, and supervised living accommodations. Identify, screen, and orient the individual(s) responsible for supervising the participants in the group living environments.

Resident Directors/Local Coordinators: Work with all implementing organizations to identify, screen, and orient a resident director(s) or local coordinator(s) to serve as a cultural and academic liaison for NSLI-Y participants during their overseas program. Ensure program sites are appropriately staffed to support all participants.

Registration: Ensure that participants and their parent(s)/legal guardian(s) complete relevant consular forms and participants are registered in the U.S. Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at <https://step.state.gov/step/>.

f) Orientations

Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO): Ensure that all NSLI-Y programs include a substantive participant PDO held in a logistically convenient location. Invite ECA to participate in all PDOs and provide copies of agendas to ECA in advance. Provide guidance to implementing organizations to ensure that all key topics are covered and a common approach to PDOs is maintained across programs. Topics must include, but are not limited to, program goals and expectations, cross-cultural training, host country information, language program tips and requirements, personal safety and security, mental health, online safety, and information on identifying and reporting sexual harassment and abuse. Ensure that each participant receives the name and contact information for the participant's resident director and/or local coordinator, an emergency contact, and health benefits information. Emphasize to participants that NSLI-Y is a U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs program.

In-Country Partner Orientation: Orient all in-country teaching staff and administrators about NSLI-Y goals and objectives, required language classroom hours, learning styles of American high school students, and relevant safety and security guidelines in advance of the arrival of NSLI-Y participants.

Host Family Orientations: Ensure that all host families receive an orientation that includes information about NSLI-Y goals and objectives (indicating it is a U.S. Department of State program), responsibilities of being a host parent, support available to host families, and an introduction to the inter-cultural experience of hosting an American high school student.

Arrival Orientation: Organize an in-country arrival orientation. Contact the Embassy/Consulate/AIT far in advance of arrival to arrange participation in the orientation, as noted above. Inform participants of relevant local and country-specific information including personal and general safety considerations, as well as emergency services offered by the Embassy/Consulate/AIT to American citizens.

Mid-Program Workshop: All academic year programs must include a mid-program workshop during which participants share and reflect upon their experiences, discuss concerns, and speak one-on-one with the resident director/local coordinator.

Re-entry Orientation: Provide a re-entry orientation to prepare participants for their return to the United States. Re-entry orientations must include a discussion of the following topics: required post-program language testing; post-program evaluation; tips for cultural re-entry;

ideas for future language study; information about other U.S. government scholarships for continued language study; internships and careers that utilize language skills; and suggestions for sharing the NSLI-Y experience with other individuals and groups in the United States. The re-entry orientation should also encourage participants to join the NSLI-Y alumni association and register on the Department's International Exchange Alumni website (<https://alumni.state.gov>).

Programs should include a re-entry workshop component in the Washington, D.C. area to allow for returning participants to share their experiences with ECA if feasible and cost-effective.

g) Key Program Activities

Design and Implement Overseas Language Programs: Design, plan, and implement overseas programs focused on language acquisition and cultural immersion, and work with implementing organizations to do the same for the programs they implement. Each implementing organization must maintain program standards and meet all program requirements. Each implementing organization should provide a detailed program schedule for each program location. Program schedules must clearly delineate language instruction, cultural enrichment activities, and community service activities. Activities should be designed to ensure participants focus on the target language and culture. Schedules must be provided well in advance of the start of the programs for review by the award recipient and ECA.

Enrichment Activities: Include cultural enrichment activities that reinforce language learning, such as planned excursions, guided internships, activities with local peers, and extra-curricular activities. Cultural activities should enhance the participants' understanding of contemporary society, culture, media, political institutions, ethnic diversity, history, and environment of the host country. Activities must be language-focused and promote NSLI-Y goals and objectives. Incorporating peer language partners on a regular basis to practice language and/or explore the local culture is strongly encouraged.

Community Service: Arrange or help facilitate volunteer community service activities during the academic year that provide opportunities for language practice and enhance understanding of local culture and society. ECA reserves the right to waive this requirement in situations where volunteer work is deemed inappropriate or risky. Community service for summer programs is optional.

Room and Board: Provide appropriate living arrangements for all participants, including housing and three meals per day. Refer to paragraph e) Pre-Program Planning and Activities, in the NSLI-Y Program Specific Guidelines above for host family and alternate housing guidance.

Stipends: Participant stipends are allowable for participants to cover incidental expenses. If proposed, all participants within one country and on the same duration of program (summer or academic year) should receive the same stipend amount, regardless of implementing organization.

Acknowledge the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs: Ensure that all print and electronic materials (online application, websites, digital resources, brochures, press releases, announcements, etc.) developed for promotional purposes and related to the program comply with ECA's Communications Guidance. Use the U.S. Department of State seal, the U.S. flag, and the NSLI-Y logo on all materials related to the program as delineated in ECA's Communications Guidance. Obtain ECA concurrence on all print and electronic materials related to NSLI-Y in advance of publication and distribution. ECA retains copyright use of, and may distribute, materials related to this program as it sees fit.

Publicity: On a regular and timely basis, provide ECA with participant, alumni and program highlights, photos, videos, press coverage, and any content that may be used to publicize the program. Inform ECA of any publicity that highlights the NSLI-Y program or NSLI-Y participants, or otherwise strengthens recruitment and outreach efforts, particularly those that involve government officials and the media. When the media interacts with NSLI-Y participants or alumni, the award recipient should make every effort to identify NSLI-Y as a U.S. Department of State program, unless otherwise advised by ECA or the Public Affairs Section of a U.S. Embassy/Consulate.

Build Relationships: Cultivate relationships with organizations that implement other U.S. government-funded critical language programs, such as STARTALK, The Language Flagship, and Critical Language Scholarships (CLS). Facilitate interactions and cooperation between NSLI-Y participants and the participants and/or alumni of other U.S. Department of State programs, including but not limited to, Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES), Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange Program (CBYX), Future Leaders Exchange Program (FLEX), Youth Ambassadors, English Access Microscholarship, and Fulbright programs.

h) Follow-on Alumni Activities

Alumni Association: Manage an alumni association that includes alumni from all NSLI-Y program years. Provide opportunities for alumni to develop their leadership skills. Work with the alumni association leadership to set goals and priorities, plan and implement activities, recruit additional alumni, and encourage alumni to share their overseas experiences with their schools and their communities. Provide financial and programming support for participation in alumni activities, including travel as appropriate, for alumni of all NSLI-Y program years.

Language Study and Career Opportunities: Propose and/or develop creative and effective ways to assist alumni in continuing their foreign language and cultural studies in high school, in post-secondary educational settings, or in other settings. Follow-on activities should also introduce alumni to internship and career opportunities in which they can use their language and cultural skills.

Department of State's International Exchange Alumni Website: Encourage participants and alumni to register on the International Exchange Alumni website (<https://alumni.state.gov/>).

Alumni Program Linkages: Encourage linkages to other Federally-sponsored language programs to share resources, pursue common goals, and inspire NSLI-Y alumni to pursue critical language learning.

Tracking Alumni: Track NSLI-Y alumni from all program years to determine whether and how their NSLI-Y language learning has influenced or affected their post-secondary experience and career choices. If requested, conduct an alumni survey.

Alumni Involvement in NSLI-Y: Encourage and facilitate the involvement of NSLI-Y alumni in supporting the current and future program through recruitment, publicity, outreach, virtual exchanges, mentoring, pre-program preparation, and program planning.

i) Program Monitoring

Present a plan to monitor the program's success following the guidelines in section D.10. Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E). Monitor participants as well as the performance of all implementing organizations, including language learning, participant support, adherence to NSLI-Y operational guidelines, and other relevant criteria.

j) Reporting Requirements

Performance Reports: The award recipient is responsible for implementing mechanisms to monitor participants and report to the ECA Grants Office and the Program Office success and impact through semi-annual program and financial performance reports. Program performance reports will address, at a minimum, the following topics: past and planned program activities, financial status (e.g., identify significant financial variations from original budgets), and the strengths and weaknesses of program design and implementation. Reports should include updates on the key activities and achievements of each implementing organization, as well as for the overall administration of the program.

The award recipient must submit to the ECA Program and Grants Offices electronic copies of all semi-annual performance reports no more than 30 days after the reporting period end dates.

Final Reports: Final program and financial performance reports must be submitted no more than 120 days after the expiration or termination of the award. The final program report should include both qualitative and quantitative data. The report must include an analysis and summary of the language acquisition of participants, as well as a summary of the performance of each of the implementing organizations.

Monitoring and Evaluation Reports: The recipient must share program monitoring and evaluation reports, both interim and summary reports, with ECA in a timely manner, and make appropriate adjustments to the programs in consultation with ECA. Monitoring and evaluation results should be addressed in the semi-annual and final program performance reports as well as in the State Assistance Management System Domestic (SAMS-D) Results Performance Monitoring (RPM) module (as outlined below in the D.10. Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)). The final program reports should include an analysis and summary of the language acquisition of participants, as well as a summary of the performance of each of the implementing organizations.

k) Fiscal Management

The award recipient is responsible for the management of all financial aspects of the program, including the sub-awards to implementing organizations. Submit financial reports as detailed above.

II. Virtual NSLI-Y

a) Identification and Management of Implementing Organizations

The applicant must demonstrate that the implementing organization for Virtual NSLI-Y has significant and relevant experience and expertise in planning and carrying out virtual programs in the respective target language(s) and providing participant support and community building activities in an online environment.

b) Nationwide Recruitment and Selection of Virtual NSLI-Y Scholars

Propose a comprehensive outreach plan and conduct a nationwide merit-based competition for U.S. applicants as outlined in the Program Specific Guidelines for NSLI-Y, section I, paragraph b) Nationwide Recruitment and Selection of NSLI-Y scholars. Specific emphasis on recruitment of participants from communities underrepresented in study abroad and those without prior exchange experience, significant overseas travel experience, familiarity with cultures associated with the target language, or formal instruction or tutoring in any of the NSLI-Y languages.

Unlike the selection process for overseas NSLI-Y programs, the Virtual NSLI-Y selection process does not need to include semifinalist interviews.

Eligibility Criteria: Ensure that the following minimum criteria are used for recruitment. Virtual NSLI-Y applicants must be:

- U.S. citizens;
- 15 to 18 years of age at the approximate beginning of the program (beginning of the program can be defined as early as when the scholarship is accepted);
- Enrolled in a high school for the 2025-26 academic year;
- Living in and attending school in the United States;
- Beginner in the target language; and,
- Has not previously participated in any NSLI-Y program or another U.S. Department of State exchange program

Requirements for Application, Public Inquiries, Selection Process, Department of State Notification, Applicant Notification are the same as for the overseas NSLI-Y program as listed in the Program Specific Guidelines, section I (NSLI-Y), paragraph b) Nationwide Recruitment and Selection of NSLI-Y Scholars.

c) Language Instruction and Assessment

Recruit qualified and vetted online instructors to provide a minimum of 30 hours of live, interactive online classroom instruction at the novice level via a videoconference platform. The curriculum should also include cultural learning opportunities and activities such as guest speakers, virtual tours of historic sites, peer engagement, etc. Teachers should receive orientation to the goals of the program and maintain an appropriate curriculum for language instruction based on participant level, relevant standards and pedagogical best practices for online learning. Class sizes should be limited to about 10 students. Student progress and learning outcomes will be evaluated by teachers through assignments and quizzes.

d) Monitoring Participant Safety and Well-Being

Ensure that Virtual NSLI-Y implementing organizations and any volunteers and staff who have regular contact with the NSLI-Y participants have undergone screening for suitability. Develop a plan to monitor participant safety, performance, participation, and wellbeing on a regular basis in an online environment and manage on-program support issues effectively. Develop a plan for providing reasonable accommodation to students with disabilities. Provide On-Program Support reports concerning serious or disciplinary issues, including recommendations for dismissal.

Develop a comprehensive plan of community building activities to foster participant connections and positive group dynamics.

Ensure that all participants abide by Virtual NSLI-Y Terms and Conditions and other program standards and requirements.

e) Pre-Program Planning and Activities

Database: Ensure that lists of all finalists conform to ECA database requirements and are submitted in a spreadsheet on dates as agreed upon by ECA and the award recipient for each Virtual NSLI-Y cohort. Secure and protect any personally identifiable information. All statistical information collected on ECA program applicants and participants should be transferable to databases maintained by ECA.

Terms and Conditions: Ensure that all participants and their parents/legal guardians sign the Virtual NSLI-Y Terms and Conditions cleared by ECA.

Communication with Participants: Ensure that information about program arrangements and logistics is communicated to participants in a timely fashion.

f) Orientations

Provide a pre-program virtual orientation to participants which covers key topics such as program goals and expectations, and instructions for using the online platform(s). Ensure that each participant receives the name and contact information for program staff who can assist with technical questions or issues on program.

g) Key Program Activities

Design, plan, and implement online language learning programs at the beginner level in select NSLI-Y languages and cultural enrichment activities which enhance participants' knowledge of the cultures of countries where the target language is spoken.

Acknowledge the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs: Ensure that all print and electronic materials (online application, websites, digital resources, brochures, press releases, announcements, etc.) developed for promotional purposes and related to the program comply with ECA's Communications Guidance. Use the U.S. Department of State seal, the U.S. flag, and the NSLI-Y logo on all materials related to the program as delineated in ECA's Communications Guidance. Obtain ECA concurrence on all print and electronic materials related to NSLI-Y in advance of publication and distribution. ECA retains copyright use of, and may distribute, materials related to this program as it sees fit.

h) Follow-on Alumni Activities

Language Study and Career Opportunities: Propose and/or develop creative and effective ways to assist alumni in continuing their foreign language and cultural studies in high school, in post-secondary educational settings, or in other settings.

Department of State's International Exchange Alumni Website: Encourage participants and alumni to register on the International Exchange Alumni website (<https://alumni.state.gov/>).

Tracking Alumni: Track Virtual NSLI-Y alumni from all program years to determine whether and how their NSLI-Y language learning has influenced or affected their post-secondary experience and career choices. If requested, conduct an alumni survey.

Alumni Involvement in NSLI-Y: Encourage the involvement of Virtual NSLI-Y alumni in publicizing the program and encourage application to traditional study abroad programs.

Adhere to Reporting Requirement and Fiscal Management guidelines for Virtual NSLI-Y as outlined in the Program Specific Guidelines, section I (NSLI-Y), paragraphs j) Reporting Requirements and k) Fiscal Management.

A.4.Recipient Responsibilities

The recipient organization's responsibilities are as follows:

- Conduct a nationwide marketing and recruitment plan to encourage and attract diverse applicants, including students with disabilities.
- Manage a nationwide, competitive application process.
- Manage the selection and placement of NSLI-Y and Virtual NSLI-Y participants.
- Maintain, and regularly update, a central database accessible to ECA and sub-grantees of participant information, protecting personally identifiable information. Ensure there are protocols and systems in place to protect PII in all phases and aspects of program implementation.
- Ensure that all implementing organizations of overseas programs coordinate with relevant U.S. Embassies/Consulates/AIT.
- Monitor participant health, safety, and well-being, and ensure on-program support for participants.
- Ensure all participants in overseas programs are enrolled in ECA's Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) or submit health plan benefits information to ECA if proposing a plan other than ASPE.
- Ensure that all participants receive the required hours of language instruction.
- Assess participant language acquisition via established and widely recognized language assessment tools for NSLI-Y programs, and via teacher evaluation for Virtual NSLI-Y programs.

- Identify and select qualified organizations as sub-award recipients to implement NSLI-Y and Virtual NSLI-Y programs.
- Provide thorough programmatic and financial oversight of sub-award recipients and program implementation; communicate clearly and work directly with sub-awardees to resolve issues.
- Work with implementing organizations to develop quality language programs.
- Organize and facilitate an annual in-person planning meeting for all NSLI-Y implementing organizations, overseas partners, and ECA staff. A virtual meeting may be considered if conditions do not allow for in-person meetings.
- Evaluate the overall program and its various components and implement improvements accordingly.
- Facilitate the activities of the NSLI-Y alumni association, including alumni from all NSLI-Y program years. Strengthen the Virtual NSLI-Y alumni network and provide opportunities for engagement.
- Coordinate engagement with the private sector for recruitment, alumni activities, and career options.
- Submit all reports and requested program information, including draft documents for approval, to ECA in a timely manner and written to professional standards. All documents submitted to ECA should be accurate, concise, and in final draft form.

A.5. Substantial Involvement:

In a cooperative agreement, the Department is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring, and will:

- Provide guidance and concurrence on participant outreach, recruitment, and selection strategy.
- Review and concur on general program location, host family/housing location, and host language institution or school for all overseas programs.
- Review and approve modifications to program locations and languages, participant numbers, implementing organizations, or program structure.
- Review implementing organizations' program descriptions and program plans/schedules for language instruction, cultural enrichment activities, community service projects, peer tutoring, and excursions for overseas programs, and for online instruction and activities for Virtual NSLI-Y programs.
- Support inclusion of overseas NSLI-Y participants in appropriate embassy/consulate/AIT activities.
- Facilitate cooperation with other Federally-supported programs aimed at critical language learning and studying abroad.
- Consult on participant support issues and concur on all participant early returns from overseas programs and dismissal from Virtual NSLI-Y programs.
- Consult on alumni activities and follow-up events, including possible activities with the private sector.

A.6. Non-Competitive Continuations (NCCs)

Proposal narratives should include a commitment to implement the program for the base year, plus one additional NCC, pending successful performance and the availability of funds. The narrative should focus on details specific to the implementation of the base year program, with the understanding that the program design, duration, and participant numbers would be similar when/if the subsequent one NCC is exercised. ECA will perform an annual performance evaluation/review to determine if an NCC will be exercised. Satisfactory performance and the availability of funds is a condition of continued administration of the program and execution of all NCCs.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement. ECA's level of involvement in this program is listed under A. Program Description above.

Fiscal Year Funds: FY 2024 – \$10,000,000, pending the availability of funds; FY 2025 – \$10,000,000, pending successful performance and the availability of funds.

Approximate Total Funding: \$20,000,000. This figure represents base year plus one NCC year, pending successful performance and the availability of funds.

Approximate Number of Awards: 1

Approximate Average Award: \$10,000,000, pending the availability of funds

Minimum "Floor" of Award: \$10,000,000, pending the availability of funds

Maximum "Ceiling" of Award: \$10,000,000 pending the availability of funds

Anticipated Award Date: April 1, 2024, pending the availability of funds

Anticipated Project Completion Date: June 20, 2028. This date reflects the anticipated duration of the award – one base year plus one NCC year.

Additional Information: ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds.

A cooperative agreement will be awarded for a period of 39 months (base year) with a NCC for one additional 12-month period (NCC years one). ECA will notify the recipient of its intention to exercise or not to exercise a NCC at least 90 days in advance of expiration of the current year after an internal evaluation of the recipient's performance. The decision to exercise a NCC will depend both on the satisfactory performance of the recipient and the availability of funds.

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

C.1. Eligible Applicants

U.S. public and private academic and cultural institutions, exchange-of-persons, and other not-for-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3) may submit applications for this competition. Applicants must have nonprofit

status with the IRS at the time of application. Please see the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for additional information.

C.2. Other Eligibility Requirements

The following additional eligibility requirements apply to this NOFO announcement:

1. ECA's grant guidelines require that organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges be limited to \$130,000 in ECA funding. ECA anticipates making one grant/cooperative agreement, in an amount of \$10,000,000 to support all costs required to implement this exchange program. Therefore, organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges are ineligible to apply under this competition.
2. All proposals must comply with the requirements stated in the NOFO, and the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI); non-compliance will result in your proposal being declared technically ineligible and given no further consideration in the review process.
3. In order to be eligible to receive an award, all organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number issued via www.SAM.gov as well as a valid registration on www.SAM.gov. Please see Section D.3 & D.5. for more information.
4. Only one proposal will be considered by ECA from each applicant organization. In cases where more than one submission from an applicant appears in grants.gov, ECA will only consider the submission made closest in time to the NOFO deadline; that submission would constitute the one and only proposal ECA would review from that applicant.

Please note: Applicant organizations are defined by their legal name, and EIN number as stated on their completed SF-424 and additional supporting documentation outlined in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document.

C.3. Cost Sharing or Matching Funds

There is no minimum or maximum percentage of cost sharing required for this competition. However, ECA encourages applicants to provide maximum levels of cost sharing and funding in support of its programs. When cost sharing is offered, it is understood and agreed that the applicant must provide the amount of cost sharing as stipulated in its proposal and later included in an approved agreement. Cost sharing may be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. For accountability, you must maintain written records to support all costs which are claimed as your contribution, as well as costs to be paid by the Federal government. Such records are subject to audit. The basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions must be in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's Guidance 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600, entitled the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and

Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. In the event you do not provide the minimum amount of cost sharing as stipulated in the approved budget, ECA's contribution may be reduced in like proportion.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the NOFO deadline has passed, ECA staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

D.1. Solicitation Package Location

The entire Solicitation Package may be downloaded from the ECA's website at <https://eca.state.gov/organizational-funding> or from the Grants.gov website at <https://www.grants.gov>.

D.2. Content and Form of Submission

Applicants must follow all instructions in the Solicitation Package, including the Proposal Submission Instruction (PSI) document, which consists of required application forms and standard guidelines for proposal preparation. The application should be submitted per the instructions under D.17. "Application Deadline and Method of Submission" section below.

D.3. Unique Entity Identifier Number

All organizations are required to have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number to apply for a grant or cooperative agreement from the U.S. Government. A UEI is one of the data elements mandated by Public Law 109-282, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), for all Federal awards. ***Note: As of April 2022, a DUNS number is no longer required for federal assistance applications. A UEI is issued as part of the required SAM.gov registration below in section D.5.***

The 2 CFR 200 requires that sub-grantees obtain a UEI number. Please note the UEI for sub-grantees is not required at the time of application but will be required before an award is processed and/or directed to a sub-grantee.

D.4. Required Proposal Elements

All proposals must contain an executive summary, proposal narrative, budget, and budget narrative.

Applicants should submit a complete and thorough proposal describing the program in a convincing and comprehensive manner.

Proposals should address succinctly, but completely, the elements described below and must follow all format requirements. All documents should be appropriately and clearly titled.

Proposals should include the following items:

Program Narrative

Executive Summary (One page)

In one double-spaced page, provide the following information about the project:

1. Name of organization/participating institutions
2. Beginning and ending dates of the program
3. Proposed theme
4. Nature of activity
5. Funding level requested from the Bureau, total program cost, total cost-sharing from applicant and other sources if applicable
6. Scope and Goals
 - a. Number and description of participants
 - b. Wider audience benefiting from program (overall impact)
 - c. Geographic diversity of program, both U.S. and overseas
 - d. Fields covered
 - e. Anticipated results (short and long-term)

Narrative

In a maximum of 20 double-spaced pages, provide a detailed description of the project addressing the areas listed below.

- Vision (statement of need, objectives, goals, benefits)
- Participating implementing organizations
- Number of anticipated participants for each language and duration, including percentages of participants assigned to each implementing organization
- Proposed locations of overseas programs
- Program activities
- Plans for outreach to a diverse applicant pool
- Monitoring of participant safety and welfare
- Language assessment
- Program monitoring and evaluation
- Follow-on activities for alumni
- Program administration and management
- Work plan/Timeframe

Additional Information to be Submitted:

Calendar of Activities

The Calendar of Activities is a monthly plan of action or timetable that demonstrates the timing and organization of the major program activities.

Letters of Commitment from all sub-award implementing organizations identified in the proposal.

Resumes of key staff members of the applicant organization and implementing organizations. No resume should exceed two pages.

Performance Monitoring Plan (see Section D.10. Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)).

D.5. Required Registration with the System for Award Management (SAM)

All organizations must be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) database in order to submit a proposal in response to an open competition on Grants.gov. ***Note: The process of obtaining or renewing a SAM.gov registration may take anywhere from 4-8 weeks. Please begin your registration as early as possible.*** Failure to register in SAM.gov will render applicants ineligible to receive funding.

All federal award recipients must maintain a current registration in the SAM database. Recipients must maintain accurate and up-to-date information in www.SAM.gov until all program and financial activity and reporting is completed on any issued award. Recipients must review and update the information at least annually after the initial registration and more frequently if required information changes or another award is granted. There is no cost associated with registering or updating SAM.gov accounts.

For more detailed instructions for registering with SAM, refer to:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-2-register-with-sam.html>

Organizations **based in the United States** or that pay employees within the United States will need an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and a UEI number prior to registering in SAM.gov.

D.6. Responsibility/Qualification Information in SAM.gov (formerly, FAPIIS)

- 1.) The Federal awarding agency, prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the U.S. government designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.gov (see 41 U.S.C. 2313);
- 2.) An applicant, at its option, may review and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered. Currently, federal agencies create integrity records in the integrity module of the Contractor Performance Assessment and

Reporting System (CPARS) and these records are visible as responsibility/qualification records in SAM.gov;

- 3.) The Federal awarding agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in §200.206 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

D.7. Required Registration with SAMS Domestic

All ECA award recipient organizations and recipient contacts and signatories must be registered with the U.S. Department of State's SAMS Domestic by accessing <https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com> and clicking the "create an account" link. SAMS Domestic is the U.S. Department of State's grants management system and is supported by the Department's Integrated Logistics Management System (ILMS). Recipient organizations and recipient contacts and signatories that have previously used SAMS Domestic as a U.S. Department of State award recipient do not need to register again. If the organization is not able to access the system, please contact the ILMS Help Desk for help in gaining access.

Support for Recipient Organizations and recipient contacts and signatories is available 24 hours, 7 days a week (except federal holidays), and can be reached at 1-888-313-ILMS (4567) or through the ILMS Self Service Portal at <https://afsism.servicenowservices.com/ilms/>.

In the event the ILMS Help Desk is unable to provide you with assistance in a timely manner, please contact ECA_SAMSDomestic@state.gov and copy the program officer associated with the solicitation.

Please take into consideration the following information when preparing your proposal narrative:

D.8. For Informational Purposes Only - Adherence to All Regulations Governing the J Visa

ECA places critically important emphasis on the security and proper administration of the Exchange Visitor (J visa) Programs and adherence by award recipients and sponsors to all regulations governing the J visa. A copy of the complete regulations governing the administration of Exchange Visitor (J) programs is available at <http://j1visa.state.gov> or from:

Office of Private Sector Exchange Designation
U.S. Department of State
SA-5, Floor C2, Room C2L13
2200 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20522

Please refer to Solicitation Package for further information.

D.9. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) and Freedom and Democracy Guidelines

Pursuant to ECA's authorizing legislation, "diversity" should be interpreted in the broadest sense and encompass differences including race, ethnicity, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, geographic location, education, income, socio-economic status, and other diversity dimensions, that may hinder inclusion. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility will enhance the program's goals and objectives and the participants' exchange experience. Proposals should demonstrate how the program will further engage diverse and underserved communities. Programs must maintain a non-political character and should be balanced and representative of the diversity of political, social and cultural life in the United States and abroad. Please refer to the "Support of DEIA" review criterion of this document for more information on how this will be reviewed as a part of any application. Please also refer to the "Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility" section in the "Proposal Submission Instructions" document for specific suggestions on incorporating DEIA into the proposal.

Public Law 104-319 provides that "in carrying out programs of educational and cultural exchange in countries whose people do not fully enjoy freedom and democracy," ECA "shall take appropriate steps to provide opportunities for participation in such programs to human rights and democracy leaders of such countries." Public Law 106 - 113 requires that the governments of the countries described above do not have inappropriate influence in the selection process. Proposals should reflect advancement of these goals in their program contents, to the full extent deemed feasible.

D.10. Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

Distinct from grants or cooperative agreement monitoring and participant monitoring, performance monitoring is designed to assess progress against a program's goals and objectives. A performance monitoring framework is vital to tracking the direction, pace, and magnitude of change that result from ECA programs.

ECA created the Monitoring Data for ECA (MODE) Framework to measure the performance of ECA programs. **The MODE Framework provides standard indicators and corresponding survey questions to ensure consistent measures across all ECA programs.** More resources and guidance documents on the MODE Framework are available online at:

<https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-monitoring-evaluation-learning-and-innovation-meli-unit/mode-framework-eca-applicants-and>.

For this proposal, ECA requires the applicant include the MODE Framework objectives and

indicators listed below (note that, because not all MODE objectives and indicators are relevant for a program, the numbering below will not be sequential). In addition to the ECA-required objectives and indicators, applicants may also select additional MODE Framework indicators (see the Indicator Book on the MODE Framework website), or design custom objectives and indicators that are specific to the proposed program and this proposal.

- Demographic Questions as outlined in the Indicator Book on page vi, and Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) (<https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-monitoring-evaluation-learning-and-innovation-meli-unit/mode-framework-eca-applicants-and>)
- Objective 1: Advance participant and beneficiary cross-cultural competence and global perspective
 - o Sub-Objective 1.1: Promote cultural exchanges and enhance understanding between participants and their host communities.
 - E1.1.01: Percent of participants reporting that their program experience offered opportunities to engage with other cultures
 - E1.1.04: Percent of participants with more favorable opinions of the United States Government (core indicator)
 - E1.1.09: Percent of participants who traveled abroad for the first time because of their program (core indicator)- Traditional NSLI-Y only
 - E1.1.11: Percent of American participants indicating a change in their understanding of their host country's culture and values - Traditional NSLI-Y only
 - E1.1.16: Percent of virtual exchange (VE) participants who report VE as their only likely way to interact with citizens from other countries in the future- Virtual NSLI-Y only
 - E1.1.19: Percent of participants agreeing with statements in support of democratic values (core indicator)
- Objective 2: Increase the impact that participants and alumni have on their communities / countries.
 - o Sub-Objective 2.2: Foster participants' belief that civic engagement benefits communities/countries
 - E2.2.01: Percent of participants who have more confidence in their ability to have an impact in their home country (core indicator)
- Objective 3: Strengthen engagement among participants, alumni, beneficiaries, and institutions
 - E3.0.07: Percent of participants who identify as a Department of State program participant (core indicator)
- Objective 4: Strengthen personal, professional, and technical abilities and aptitudes of participants and beneficiaries
 - E4.0.03: Percent of participants reporting an increase in soft skills as a result of their program participation

- E4.0.09: Percent of participants reporting an increase in language skills as a result of their program participation
- E4.0.14: Percent of participants reporting new digital skills/competencies gained from virtual exchange (VE) programming- Virtual NSLI-Y only
- o Sub-Objective 4.1: Participants engage in language, academic, professional, and cultural exchange programs
 - E4.1.01: Total number of participants (core indicator)
 - E4.1.02: Total number of program cohorts (core indicator)
 - E4.1.06: Number of participants in programs with formal, dedicated language learning activities
 - E4.1.14: Number of virtual exchange (VE) programs- Virtual NSLI-Y only
 - E4.1.15: Number of participants in virtual exchange (VE) programs- Virtual NSLI-Y only
- Objective 8: Enhance the quality and effectiveness of ECA programs by leveraging the Bureau's resources, policy, and stakeholder relationships
 - E8.0.03: Response rate for participant surveys (core indicator)

Performance Monitoring Plans (PMPs)

ECA recommends the use of a PMP to serve as the primary reference document for performance monitoring for this award. If used, the PMP is an important part of any proposal, as it outlines how the applicant plans to track progress towards the proposed program's goals and objectives through indicators and corresponding data collection questions. A PMP document that includes all MODE Framework indicators is a part of this solicitation's attachments. Specific instructions on how to modify the PMP to be responsive to this solicitation are included in that document. While ECA recommends the applicant use the PMP format provided, this is not a requirement. If a PMP is not included in the proposal, applicants should provide similar information to that found in the suggested PMP format, in a presentation of your choice. A training on how to complete a PMP is available here: <https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-monitoring-evaluation-learning-and-innovation-meli-unit/mode-framework-eca-applicants-and>. Successful PMPs (or similar documentation) should include the following:

- Objectives. Programmatic objectives are statements of the condition(s) that state what the program is designed to achieve. Objectives are therefore bound by the resources and timeframe of the program and must be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound (SMART; see the ECA Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Innovation (MELI) Unit's pages on the ECA website for more information: <https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-evaluation-division/capacity-building>). In addition to those outlined above, the applicant may propose other program objectives from the MODE Framework, the Functional Bureau Strategy (<https://eca.state.gov/about-bureau>), or other applicant-designed program-specific objectives.

- **Indicators.** Performance indicators are measures used to gauge progress toward programmatic objectives and sub-objectives. Indicators should be as specific as possible (following the SMART principles) and include any proposed disaggregations (meaning, breakdowns of the data by subgroups, such as gender or country; the PMP lists the demographic questions required to obtain the information necessary to report the disaggregations). Each indicator should also include a target number to be achieved. A target is a planned level of result to be achieved within an explicit timeframe.
 - If you do not use the PMP format provided, note that any performance monitoring reference document the applicant submits should include the information in the column headers (Indicator Name, Definition, Target, Survey Question, etc.) in the PMP attachment at a minimum.
 - In addition to those indicators outlined in above, the applicant may propose additional custom, program-specific indicators in the PMP (ECA recommends the proposed PMPs include a minimum of one indicator for each custom programmatic objective).
 - During the period of performance of the award, the ECA program office may further revise, add, or remove indicators. Therefore, the applicant's PMP and data collection instruments should be flexible enough to incorporate those once established.

Award recipients are responsible for collecting indicator data only on participant outcomes during the period of performance of the award itself (see the PMP for guidelines as to when these data collection efforts should occur). ECA will measure outcomes of ECA participants at one, three, five, and 10 years after the exchange has ended to capture the long-term impact of ECA programming unless otherwise specified in the NOFO and/or POGI. In this instance, the recipient will be responsible for coordinating with ECA on any alumni surveys to de-duplicate questions and minimize potential survey fatigue.

Award recipients will be required to submit an upload of the raw data (in CSV format) along with the State Assistance Management System Domestic (SAMS-D RPM) reporting (see below). Regardless of the survey platform used, **all** MODE Framework survey questions outlined above are **required** (i.e., should be forced response); please see the Consent Language in the MODE Framework Indicator Book for more information on how to convey this to participants/survey respondents.

Program Performance M&E Narrative

The applicant should include information within the program narrative section(s) of the proposal that outlines how the applicant intends to measure the indicators listed above. This will be separate from the PMP and should include but not be limited to:

- An overview of resources available to the applicant that outline the team structure and responsibilities surrounding performance monitoring.
- The mechanism(s) through which surveys and other data collection tools (if applicable) will be administered, including which platform will be used, and when and how surveys will be advertised to participants – detailing strategies to ensure adequate survey response rates (https://eca.state.gov/files/bureau/eca_eval_division_survey_response_rates.pdf), and to reduce selection and non-response bias.
- A brief explanation of data analysis and reporting procedures.
- An overview of a proposed learning plan and feedback loops to ensure that the Grant Officer (GO)/Grant Officer Representative (GOR) are informed on performance monitoring issues at regular intervals.

SAMS-D RPM Reporting Requirements

The SAMS-D is a database solution that serves as the official system of record for all U.S. Department of State and ECA awards. The Results Performance Monitoring (RPM) module within SAMS-D is an extension module that enables users to report performance monitoring data in the same system where they currently manage federal assistance actions. As part of ECA's efforts to streamline data collection and management, the recipient(s) of this award will be required to input performance reporting data outlined in this solicitation into the SAMS-D RPM. The data stored in the SAMS-D RPM will provide ECA with a bureau-wide, uniform M&E reporting tool that is already linked with other elements of the awards familiar to existing awardees.

D.11. Virtual Exchange Component

When changing political, health, environmental, or other similar circumstances require a suspension or halt of in-person activities and where ECA determines that a virtual alternative is appropriate and viable, award recipients should demonstrate the ability and capacity to transition from in-person to virtual exchanges. Proposals should demonstrate the organization's capacity to provide innovative options for virtual activities to substitute for in-person engagement for program participants. Organizations should consider how they will implement virtual exchange activities, given the potential limits to internet access from participants in some locations and while continuing to advance foreign policy objectives and achieve lasting benefits for U.S. citizens and international participants.

In addition to planning for virtual exchange activities if in-person programming is prohibited, ECA welcomes innovative ideas on how organizations can leverage virtual programming technologies during or in addition to in-person programming. ECA encourages organizations submitting proposals in response to this solicitation to suggest one or more virtual exchange components to complement the in-person exchange. The virtual exchange component(s) could come before, during and/or after the physical exchange. The objective for the virtual exchange

component(s) is to augment the impact of the in-person exchange described in this solicitation. ECA encourages organizations to propose virtual exchange ideas that take advantage of ECA's existing web and social networking platforms. Virtual exchange components would be coordinated with and approved by the ECA program office and U.S. missions abroad on a project-by-project basis.

D.12. Communications Guidance for ECA Recipients

All ECA Recipients must adhere to the requirements in [ECA's Communications Guidance](#) on the creation of program branding and attribution, websites, social media, and press.

D.13. Celebration of America's Semiquincentennial

ECA is excited to play a key role in making the Semiquincentennial – commonly known as “America250” – a truly global celebration. As the period of performance for this award is scheduled to cover part or all of calendar year (CY) 2026, the applicant may wish to consider ways the program can celebrate America250. Any America250 focused activities or plans will be subject to ECA approval and direction, and changes may be requested by ECA. Use of any ECA-provided America250 brand elements will be subject to advance ECA approval and require adherence to Department of State and ECA guidelines for such branding.

D.14. Budget Format

Applicants must submit SF-424A – “Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs” along with a comprehensive budget for the entire program. There must be a summary budget, a detailed budget, and a budget narrative. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification. A detailed budget and budget narrative for applicant and proposed sub-award implementing organizations must be included.

D.14.a. Allowable costs for the program include the following:

For NSLI-Y:

- 1) Staff, chaperone, group escorts, resident director/group leader costs and per diem, in accordance with General Services Administration (GSA) standards, separating out: international airfare; in-country travel overseas; and domestic travel in the U.S.
- 2) Participant travel costs
- 3) Materials and supplies
- 4) Language program tuition
- 5) Language-related enrichment and community service activities
- 6) Costs associated with identifying host families and monitoring participants' safety and well-being throughout the program
- 7) Costs associated with providing reasonable accommodations to participants and alumni

- 8) Cell phones and service for participants for emergency use
- 9) Food and lodging, when not in home-stay
- 10) Alumni and follow-on activities for NSLI-Y alumni of all program years
- 11) Program, teacher, and student evaluation
- 12) Program planning meeting
- 13) Promotional materials, including website development
- 14) Stipends to participants
- 15) Stipends to host families
- 16) COVID testing and personal protective equipment (PPE)

For Virtual NSLI-Y:

- 1) Staff
- 2) Teachers
- 3) Materials, supplies, and shipping
- 4) Technology platforms
- 5) Cultural programming

Please refer to the Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

D.15. Key Personnel

ECA recommends that the applicant identify intended key personnel positions via an asterisk (*) or other marking in the proposal budget, budget narrative, or a separate appendix. If not provided in the application, recipients must submit the names, titles, and brief biographical sketches of key personnel to the Grants Officer and GOR within 30 days of an award being issued. Additional information regarding key personnel requirements can be found in the State Department's Standard Terms and Conditions, VI. Recipient Responsibility and Compliance with Federal Requirements (link to: <https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-the-procurement-executive/>).

D.16. Non-Competitive Continuations (NCCs)

Pending successful performance and the availability of funds this award will utilize NCCs as discussed above.

D.16.a. For competitions that will exercise a NCC applicants must submit:

- 1.) The SF-424A which must include the budget request amount for the base-year of the program.
- 2.) A detailed proposal narrative and budget for the base year of funding (Please refer to the Proposal Submission Instruction Document (PSI) for general budget guidance.). The narrative should also include a brief commitment to implement the program for the

base year, plus one additional NCC year, pending successful program performance and the availability of funds.

- 3.) An abbreviated/estimated summary budget presenting the total projected costs for the anticipated total duration of programming (base year, plus one NCC year).

D.16.b. To exercise the NCC mechanism the recipient will be required to submit:

- 1.) Performance and financial reports on time.
- 2.) A request in writing to ECA at least 30 days in receipt of the NCC invitation.
- 3.) A summary budget that projects expenses through the end of the current year.
- 4.) A detailed budget outlining expenses for the requested NCC year.
- 5.) A brief narrative to support the continuation of the award.

D.16.c. For awards using NCCs, in addition to the Substantial Involvement for the Cooperative Agreement, the ECA Grants Officer and Program Officer will:

- 1.) Closely monitor the recipient's performance through site visits, desk audits, mandatory performance and financial reports, consultations, and other forms of communication and dialogue before exercising additional NCCs. (Additional details regarding monitoring and oversight of the program by ECA representatives will be provided at the time the base-year award is made.)
- 2.) Review and evaluate all quarterly or semi-annual program and financial reports.
 - a. All program and financial reporting requirements must be current and up to date before ECA will exercise additional NCCs.
 - b. Any/all concerns, issues, or modifications requested by the Grants Officer or Program Officer to the original program design or method of implementation must be responded to in writing.
 - c. The ECA Grants Officer and Program Officer will review and advise of ECA's approval or disapproval of the response before issuing subsequent NCCs.
- 3.) Prior Grants Officer approval is required to utilize the remainder from an unobligated balance from a prior funding period to the subsequent funding period. If the Grants Officer determines that some or all of the unobligated funds are not necessary to perform the program activity, the Grants Officer may decline the Recipient's request to utilize the remainder from the unobligated balance.

The Grants Officer may, at their discretion, use the unobligated balance to reduce or offset future funding for a subsequent funding period. An unobligated balance at the end of a funding period is not sufficient justification to utilize the remainder of funds. A final determination and approval to utilize the remainder of any funds will be

communicated via a cost amendment with adjustment, if any, to new obligation amounts.

The request to utilize the remainder from an unobligated balance must include:

- 1.) A brief narrative why funds remain unobligated and how the unobligated funds will be used to complete the previously approved goals and objectives of the program.
- 2.) A detailed budget that reflects the amount of unobligated funds to date, and anticipated expenditures in the subsequent period of performance for all cost categories under the authorized budget.

D.17. Application Deadline and Method of Submission

Application Deadline Date: Friday, January 26, 2024.

Method of Submission: Applications may only be submitted electronically through Grants.gov (<https://www.grants.gov>). Complete solicitation packages are available at Grants.gov in the “Search Grants” portion of the system.

D.18. Grants.gov Registration, Application Submission, and Receipt Procedures

Eligible organizations should follow the instructions available in the ‘Get Started’ portion of the site (<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>).

D.18.a. How to Register to Apply through Grants.gov

Applicants should read instructions carefully and prepare the information requested before beginning the registration process. Reviewing and assembling the required information before beginning the registration process will alleviate last-minute searches for required information.

The registration process can take up to four weeks to complete. Therefore, registration should be done in sufficient time to ensure it does not impact your ability to meet required application submission deadlines. Applicants should check with appropriate staff within their organizations immediately after reviewing this NOFO to confirm or determine their registration status with Grants.gov. Organization applicants can find complete instructions here:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html>

D.18.b. How to Submit an Application to ECA via Grants.gov

For access to complete instruction on how to apply for Notice of Funding Opportunities on Grants.gov, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>

D.18.c. Grants.gov Support and Submission Issues

Direct all questions regarding Grants.gov registration and submission issues to:

Grants.gov Customer Support

Contact Center Phone: 800 -518-4726

Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; closed on federal holidays.

Email: support@grants.gov

D.18.d. Timely Receipt Requirements and Proof of Timely Submission

Applicants have until 11:59 p.m., Washington, DC time of the closing date to ensure that their entire application has been uploaded to the Grants.gov site. There are no exceptions to the above deadline. Applications uploaded to the site after the application deadline date and time will be automatically rejected by the Grants.gov system and will be found technically ineligible.

Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not wait until the application deadline to begin the submission process through Grants.gov.

Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov. An electronic date/time stamp is generated within the system when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. The applicant Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) will receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov with the successful transmission of their application. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/time stamp and Grants.gov Tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

When ECA successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov, Grants.gov will provide an electronic acknowledgement of receipt of the application to the email address of the applicant with the AOR role. Again, proof of timely submission shall be the official date and time that Grants.gov receives your application. Please also be mindful of any Grants.gov generated error messages that may appear during the application process as they may result in some documents not transmitting correctly.

Applicants using slow internet should be aware that transmission can take some time before Grants.gov receives your application. Grants.gov will provide either an error or a successfully received transmission in the form of an email sent to the applicant with the AOR role. The Grants.gov Support Center reports that some applicants end the transmission because they think that nothing is occurring during the transmission process. Please be patient and give the system time to process the application.

The Grants.gov website includes extensive information on all phases/aspects of the Grants.gov process, including an extensive section on frequently asked questions, located under the "Applicant FAQs" section of the website. ECA strongly recommends that all potential applicants review thoroughly the Grants.gov website, well in advance of submitting a proposal through the Grants.gov system. ECA will not notify you upon receipt of electronic applications.

PLEASE NOTE: ECA bears no responsibility for applicant timeliness of submission or data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes for proposals submitted via Grants.gov. Prior to submitting applications through Grants.gov, please ensure you meet all Grants.gov system and software requirements, including Adobe software compatibility. You can verify if your version of Adobe software is compatible with Grants.gov, by visiting <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html>.

It is the responsibility of all applicants submitting proposals via the Grants.gov web portal to ensure that proposals have been received by Grants.gov in their entirety, and ECA bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes.

D.19. Intergovernmental Review of Applications

Executive Order 12372 does not apply to this program.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

E.1. Review Process

ECA will check that all proposals meet the technical requirements in this solicitation. Proposals that do not meet the guidelines, including those under the eligibility section above or in the PSI, will be ineligible for further review.

All eligible proposals will be reviewed by the program office before being reviewed by an ECA grant panel and may be reviewed by Public Diplomacy sections overseas, State Department regional bureaus, or other State Department offices, as appropriate. All reviewers, including the ECA grant panels will review any eligible proposals based on the criteria below. Recommended proposals will be reviewed for compliance with Federal and Bureau regulations and guidelines, and assessed for risk. Final funding decisions are made by the U.S. Department of State's Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Only an ECA Grant Officer has the final authority to issue assistance awards.

E.2. Review Criteria

An ECA grants panel will competitively evaluate all technically eligible applications according to the criteria stated below. These criteria are not rank ordered and all carry equal weight in the proposal evaluation.

- 1) **Program planning:** Proposals should have a detailed agenda and work plan that demonstrates your institution's ability to carry out the program. The plan should follow the program guidelines described in this solicitation.
- 2) **Support of DEIA:** Proposals should show how the program and your institution supports ECA's policy on diversity. Proposals should have a clear DEIA plan that is integrated into all aspects of program administration, design, content, and implementation. Proposals

should demonstrate how DEIA will enhance the program's goals, objectives, and the participants' exchange experience. Proposals should demonstrate how the program will further engage diverse and underserved communities. It is important that proposals have a clearly articulated DEIA plan and not simply express general support for the concept of DEIA.

- 3) **Institutional Capacity and Institution's Record/Ability:** Proposals should include the necessary personnel and institutional resources to achieve the program results. Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs and responsible fiscal management. ECA will consider the past performance of prior recipients, including the timely submission of reports, and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.
- 4) **Follow-on Activities:** Proposals should provide a plan for continued follow-on activity after the ECA supported program ends, ensuring that programs are not isolated events.
- 5) **Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):** Proposals should have a fully developed M&E plan that includes goals, objectives, and indicators. The plan should be feasible and aligned with the M&E section of this solicitation. Proposals should include a realistic learning plan that outlines how your organization plans to review, understand, and incorporate M&E data into programmatic decisions and practices. All submitted M&E plans will be reviewed to ensure the applicant has provided at least the required information outlined in the M&E section of this solicitation and demonstrated the applicant's capacity to carry out the M&E plan.
- 6) **Cost-effectiveness and cost-sharing:** Proposals should keep the overhead components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, as low as possible. All costs should be necessary and appropriate. Proposals should maximize cost share through other private sector support and institutional direct funding contributions.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

F.1. Award Notices

Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal ECA procedures. Successful applicants will receive a Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from the ECA's Grants Division. The FAA and the original proposal with subsequent modifications (if applicable) shall be the only binding authorizing document between the recipient and the U.S. Government. The FAA will be signed by an authorized Grants Officer and transmitted to the recipient's responsible officer as identified in the application.

Unsuccessful applicants will receive notification of the results of the application review from the ECA program office coordinating this competition following the completion of the review process.

F.2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements:

Before submitting an application, applicants should review all the terms and conditions and required certifications which will apply to this award, to ensure that they will be able to comply.

Terms and Conditions applicable to all ECA agreements include:

- Office of Management and Budget's Guidance 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600, entitled the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.
- U.S. Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions.

For a copy of the OMB Guidance cited, please download from the www.ecfr.gov website.

For a copy of the U.S. Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions, or to review other Department of State assistance information, please download from:

<https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-the-procurement-executive/>

F.3. Reporting Requirements

Recipients will be required to submit financial reports and program reports. The award document will specify how often these reports must be submitted. All reports must be submitted in a timely manner. For planning purposes, applicants can expect to provide ECA with an electronic copy of the following required reports:

- 1.) Performance Progress Reports (PPRs) shall be required at a minimum annually and no more frequently than quarterly. Annual reports shall be due 120 calendar days after the cooperative agreement year; quarterly or semi-annual reports shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. (Frequency of these reports will be determined by the Grants Officer and Program Officer.) The complete report and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the Recipient as a *Post Award Activity* under the corresponding record for this Cooperative Agreement/Grant in the U.S. Department of State's [SAMS Domestic](#).
- 2.) The Federal Financial Report (FFR SF-425/SF-425a) must be submitted through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Payment Management System (PMS). The electronic version of the FFR can be accessed at: <http://www.dpm.psc.gov/>. Once a financial report has been approved by the Department, the Recipient must upload the approved report to [SAMS Domestic](#), in the same manner specified for the programmatic reports. Failure to comply with these reporting requirements may jeopardize the Recipient's eligibility for future Cooperative Agreements/Grants.

In the event you are having difficulty uploading reports and the ILMS help desk is not providing sufficient assistance, please email ECA_SAMSDomestic@state.gov.

- 3.) A final program and financial report no more than 120 days after the expiration or termination of the award.
- 4.) Because the competition will allow for the exercise of NCCs, applicants must submit program and financial reports on time. The due dates for these reports will be included in the cooperative agreement. The program and financial reports must demonstrate substantial progress by addressing progress towards the original approved goals and objectives, relative activities and events, and supporting fiscal data. The reports will be reviewed by both the assigned Grant Officer and Program Officer.

Award recipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to ECA in their regular program reports. (Please refer to D.10. Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) information.)

All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to ECA upon request.

F.4. Program Data Requirements

Award recipients will be required to maintain specific data on program participants and activities in an electronically accessible database format that can be shared with ECA as required. At a minimum, the data must include the following:

- 1.) Name, address, contact information and biographic sketch of all persons who travel internationally on funds provided by the agreement or who benefit from the award funding but do not travel.
- 2.) Itineraries of international and domestic travel, providing dates of travel and cities in which any exchange experiences take place. Final schedules for in-country and U.S. activities must be received by the ECA Program Officer at least three workdays prior to the official opening of the activity.

G. AGENCY CONTACTS

For questions about this announcement, contact: Molly A. Kress, U.S. Department of State, Youth Programs Division, ECA/PE/C/PY, 771-204-9994, KressM@state.gov.

All correspondence with ECA concerning this NOFO should reference the title and funding opportunity number listed at the top of this solicitation.

Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the NOFO deadline has passed, ECA staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

H. Other Information

Notice

The terms and conditions published in this NOFO are binding and may not be modified by any ECA representative. Explanatory information provided by ECA that contradicts published language will not be binding. Issuance of the NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government. ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. Awards will be subject to periodic programmatic and financial reporting and evaluation requirements as outlined in the NOFO.

Scott Weinhold
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State

November 16, 2023